

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In view of the amendments and remarks herein, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested. By this Amendment, claims 1, 7 and 12 have been amended in order to more clearly distinguish the prior art of record. Claims 1-16 are pending for further examination.

Claims 1-16 have been rejected under 35 USC 103 as allegedly being obvious over Ventrella in view of Bickmore. For at least the following reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the combined teachings of the cited references fail to render obvious the invention as defined by the amended claims herein. Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Amended Claims 1 is directed to a method of animating a user-controlled character in a three-dimensional virtual environment, including, *inter alia*, defining a tag at a location in the virtual environment that is external to the character, and assigning tag information to the tag that designates a type of reaction for the character when in proximity to the tag. The tag is detected when the character is within a predetermined proximity to the tag, and the location of the tag and the tag information are used to dynamically modify the character's animation in real time.

The Examiner has not identified any disclosure in Ventrella that discloses the tag as defined in claim 1. For example, Ventrella does not disclose the feature of defining a tag at a location in a virtual environment that is external to the character. Nor does Ventrella disclose using the location of the tag and the tag information to dynamically

modify the character's animation in real time. Instead, the Examiner has identified information stored in the "genes" of an avatar that controls certain attributes of the avatar. This disclosure in Ventrella does not disclose or suggest the claimed feature of defining a tag at a location in a virtual environment external to the character or using the location of the tag and the tag information to dynamically modify the character's animation in real time. The stimuli identified by the Examiner in Ventrella is not the same and does not suggest the tag as defined in the instant claims, which includes tag information that designates a type of reaction for the character when in proximity to the tag. In addition, Ventrella does not disclose using the location of the tag and the tag information to dynamically modify the character's animation in real time.

The deficiencies of Ventrella are not overcome by the teachings of Bickmore. First, Bickmore is only directed to a two dimensional (document) environment. The claims have been amended to recite a three-dimensional environment in order to further distinguish this reference. In addition, Bickmore does not teach to use the location of a tag as a parameter when generating the dynamic animation sequence. While the Avatar of Bickmore responds to objects in the document, there is no teaching or suggestion in Bickmore to use the location of the object (as opposed to information in the object) as a factor for the dynamic animation sequence. The pending claims have been amended herein in order to further clarify this distinguishing feature. Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 are respectfully requested.

Applicant also submits that amended independent claims 7 and 12 are not rendered obvious by the cited references for substantially the same reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1.

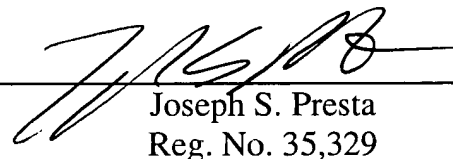
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant believes that all of the pending claims clearly and patentably distinguish the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection and passage of this case to issuance at an early date are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner have any questions, or deem that any further issues need to be addressed prior to allowance, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the phone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By: _____


Joseph S. Presta
Reg. No. 35,329

JSP:mg
1100 North Glebe Road, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201-4714
Telephone: (703) 816-4000
Facsimile: (703) 816-4100